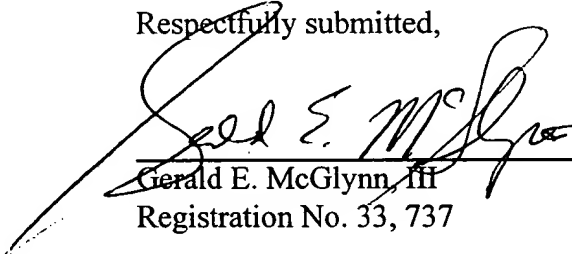


**REMARKS**

Claims 1-27 were originally pending in the PCT application to which priority is claimed in this case. In a communication dated September 7, 2000, applicants submitted new pages 1-5 that included a reference to WO-A-98/19 899 in the background section of the application as well as new claims 1-12. By way of this Preliminary Amendment, the specification has been amended to conform to U.S. patent practice. In addition, claim 3 has been amended to eliminate its multi-dependency and new claim 13 has been added. New claim 13 includes the limitations set forth in claim 3 but is dependant upon claim 2. No new matter has been added.

The applicants respectfully submit that the claims clearly distinguish over the prior art and are therefore allowable. Accordingly, applicants respectfully solicit favorable action toward allowance of the claims pending in this case.

Respectfully submitted,



Gerald E. McGlynn, III  
Registration No. 33, 737

BLISS McGLYNN, P.C.  
2075 W. Big Beaver, Suite 600  
Troy, MI 48084  
(248) 649-6090

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## APPENDIX A

### Version of Amendments to the Specification and Claims with Markings to Show the Changes Made

3. (Amended) The coupler as claimed in claim 1[or 2], characterized therein that there are a pair of spaced spacing formations.

13. (New) The coupler as claimed in claim 2, characterized therein that there are a pair of spaced spacing formations.